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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: KMT CHAIRMAN MA YING-JEOU'S U.S. TRIP

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage March 25-27 on KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou's U.S. trip; the DPP's decision to cancel its proposed "Grand Debate" on the party's policy toward China; the Ministry of Transportation and Communications' announcement Saturday regarding the freeway electronic toll collection system; the civil lawsuit filed by a local labor broker against Thai laborers for causing a riot at a Kaohsiung mass rapid transit construction site; and the suicide of a suspect allegedly involved in a recent train derailment. Several papers carried in their inside pages March 26 Ma's statement at UC Berkeley that the status quo across the Taiwan Strait is President Chen Shui-bian's "Five No's" pledges. The pro-status quo "China Times" also ran a banner headline on its page two March 27 that read: "Ma Being in the Spotlight in the United States; Bian and [Annette] Lu Will Not Take Any Action [against Ma] for the Time Being." The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, ran an exclusive news story on its page two March 27 with the headline: "China Plays a New Malicious Trick [on Taiwan] by Planning to Propose Implementation Guidelines for Its Anti-Secession Law."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial criticized Ma's U.S. remarks and said they are full of "blind spots." A "Liberty Times" news analysis said Washington's high-profile treatment of Ma sent out the wrong message to Beijing and Japan. The article added that if Washington joins the others in isolating President Chen, how can it expect Chen not to create more surprises? An editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" said Ma has to clarify his statements about primary and secondary enemies when he comes back to Taiwan. An editorial in the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" also condemned Ma's pro-China stance as allegedly revealed in remarks he made in the United States. Editorials in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" and "Taiwan News" both blasted Ma for using words to romance Washington while failing to defend Taiwan's democracy and national interests. End summary.

A) "Ma Ying-jeou's Remarks During His Visit to the United States Are Full of Blind Spots"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] said in its editorial (3/27):

"... We are not sure if Ma Ying-jeou dares to promote the Republic of China to U.S. officials when he meets with them. [Does he] dare to ask the United States to recognize the Republic of China? In our view, Ma does not have such courage. The reason is that U.S. officials would faint if they heard [his] 'One China is the Republic of China' [statement]. All Ma is doing is bringing exports back home [appearing to speak to foreigners while in fact talking to his constituency at home]. What's more, Ma's home market also includes

China across the Strait. For the People's Republic of China, a Republic of China aimed at ultimate unification can be said to be a pawn for annexing Taiwan. ...

"Ma has brought his revised ultimate unification theory along during his grand U.S. visit. However, the U.S. government should know it very clearly. Ma's 'One China is the Republic of China' [statement] is not only ignorant of the facts, but also contrary to legal principles. The goal of his cross-Strait interim structure is not to maintain the cross-Strait status quo but [to seek] ultimate unification. The United States learns about Ma's bottom line by letting him pay a visit, and this may have given him an opportunity to show off, but Ma's authentic unification complex is more highlighted as a consequence."

B) "The United States' High-Profile Treatment to Ma Sends out the Wrong Message"

Washington correspondent Nadia Tsao said in a news analysis of the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] (3/25)

"... The Bush administration's message conveyed via its high-profile treatment of Ma Ying-jeou has evidently created spacious room for different interpretations. The move may not only likely endanger the relationship between the Bian administration and Washington, but will also send the wrong message to both Beijing and Japan. ...

"The Bush administration has repeatedly requested that Beijing engage in a dialogue with the Bian administration. If [U.S. Deputy Secretary of State] Robert Zoellick and other [high-ranking

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American] officials' meetings [with Ma] were meant to play a united-front game by using Taiwan's opposition parties to restrain the Bian administration, Beijing will surely follow suit. [In that case,] how can Beijing possibly take Washington's request for [the resumption of] a cross-Strait dialogue seriously? If Washington also joins [the others] in isolating Chen Shui-bian, how can it expect Chen, who is not under pressure for re-election, not create more surprises for the United States? ..."

C) "Shadows Behind Ma's Successful Trip to the United States"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] editorialized (3/27):

"Ma's biggest oversight during his U.S. trip was that he said something very inappropriate - that is, he said he hopes China could differentiate between the Republic of Taiwan and the Republic of China, [namely] its primary and secondary enemy. ... If Ma regards Taiwan independence as a target that he will join China to fight against, then what did he really mean by his earlier statement that "Taiwan independence is one of the possible options for Taiwan people [to decide their future]"? Which of these two statements that contradict with each other is true? Is it another lie [when Ma claimed that he] respects the democratic choices of the Taiwan people? Taiwan independence cannot possibly be a possible option for the Taiwan people and at the same time being a target that [Ma] will join China in fighting against. One of these two statements must be a lie, but which one? Ma must clarify that when he comes back to Taiwan.

"Heritage Foundation's Chinese affairs specialist John J. Tkacik was concerned about Ma and the KMT's blueprint, saying that [the KMT's] refusal to invest in Taiwan's national defense in the face of China's growing military strength will eventually lead to a situation whereas Taiwan's security is at the will of China and Taiwan will become a bigger Hong Kong. This is also something that Ma needs to clarify with the Taiwan people. ..."

D) "Ma Ying-jeou Clearly Tells China to Designate Those Pursuing National Independence As Primary Enemies; [This] Violates Taiwan Interest; [He] Is China's Fellow Traveler"

The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" [circulation: 100,000] noted in its editorial (3/27):

"[During] his current U.S. visit, Ma Ying-jeou has played the

keynote of maintaining the Republic of China's status quo and opposing Taiwan independence and nation building. He is willingly to play the 'alternative role' of check-and-balancing the mainstream Taiwan public opinion in exchange for the highly profiled reception by the U.S. side...

"... An examination of Ma's U.S. visit [shows that] he has been avoiding any talk on Taiwan's sovereignty issue all the time. Ma is only a 'Taiwan OEM [product],' which, in fact, carries a made-in-China labeling. Faced with China's menacing threat, what Taiwan needs is a leader of wisdom, who insists on the Taiwan First ideal, holds great visions, respects the public opinion, and is not afraid of the enemy's strong pressure. [What we do not need is] one with only nice appearance but no internal value, who evades talking about Taiwan's sovereignty, has only short-term visions, ignores the public opinion, fears the strong enemy, tries to collaborate with the enemy, and only talks empty words. ..."

E) "Ma Ying-jeou Romances Washington"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (3/25):

"... Most people of influence in Washington are not privy to the wealth of Ma's throwaway comments and actions over the years that reflect the subordinate status of democracy in his thinking. But these people are privy to the analysis of foreign correspondents who prefer to wax lyrical, for example, on Ma's beautiful features. Wiser heads in Washington would do well to carefully note this schmooze factor in Ma's politicking, and how it plays a more important role for his presidential aspirations than coherent policy. Much has been made of Ma's disarming language skills and congenial manner as he travels across Europe and the US, contrasting acutely with Chen's scattershot English and ventriloquist dummy's grin. And for Ma, the timing of his US trip is quite superb. Exploiting US jitters over Iraq by presenting a pragmatic 'solution' to ominous problems in the Taiwan Strait could not be a more lucrative strategy.

"It can only be hoped that those who expect more from Ma than a warm handshake, a dazzling smile and complete English sentences will continue to probe him on his willingness and ability to stand up to Chinese violence. The skeptical will also have noted that with Ma, there is only a small gap between being smooth and being slippery. It has proven impossible for anyone to establish why, in Ma's opinion, Beijing would take the slightest notice of a president who fails to keep his military fully armed. This is because Ma has patronized his US audiences with a mix of carefully structured evasiveness and mistruths. There's also been a hefty slice of pie in the sky: the idea that China would consider Ma's proposal of a 30 to 50-year moratorium on unification and then honor any agreement is so naive as to be pitiful. ...

"Any person who walks away from a meeting with Ma starry-eyed at the sight of a 'Chinese' political leader speaking passable English and promising stability, economic development and a democratic China is abjectly naive - and Ma would surely agree, given that he has already stated that Americans are gullible. The irony is that it is to these same Americans whom Ma is pitching his wares. Sadly, there is every likelihood that he will find many an eager customer itching for traction in the dying years of the Bush administration."

F) "Ma Displays Lack of Integrity in U.S."

The pro-independence "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] wrote in an editorial (3/27):

"During his touted trip to the United States last week, opposition Kuomintang Chairman and Taipei City Mayor Ma Ying-jeou demonstrated his lack of political integrity and sincerity on the key issues facing our nation, including the critical problem of how to maintain lasting peace in the Taiwan Strait. ... There is little doubt that Ma succeeded in boosting his image with this visit, but it is unfortunate that in the process, Taiwan's national interests have become the sacrificial victim. ... Ma's lack of integrity or courage to defend Taiwan democracy against China's military intimidation and missile threats, as well as his transparent elevation of his

individual and partisan interests above the national interests of
Taiwan's 23 million people deserves serious criticism and censure.
..."

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